



KidPower! News

From the NH Department of Health and Human Services

Winter 2008



The Dark Days of Winter

The winter solstice takes place here in the Northern Hemisphere between December 20-23, depending on the year.

The winter solstice marks the shortest day or longest night of the year. During winter, the North Pole is tilted away from the sun which makes our days shorter. In the Southern Hemisphere, it is summer and the days are longer there.

The short days and long nights of winter are often a challenge for many people. The good news is that after the winter solstice, the days start getting longer by about a minute a day.

A week after the winter solstice the amount of daylight will increase by 7 minutes. It may not seem like much, but by the end of January, the day is more than a half hour longer.

What will you do with that extra half hour of daylight? How about finding a way to get outside and enjoy the winter! There are many easy tips on page 2 to help your family enjoy winter and have fun!

For many families, winter is a mix of too much food and not enough activity. Whether it's tempting cookies or foods, football game parties, or family get togethers, food is often the focus during these events. It can be hard to make time to be active and enjoy the season. With a few small changes winter can be a time for family fun and activity.



Make time for outdoor play on the weekends. When everyone is moving around outside, wearing coats, hats, boots, and mittens, enough heat is generated by the body to stay warm. Making snowmen, snow angels, and building snow sculptures are easy ways to enjoy winter. Sledding is a great winter activity, too! Meet friends at a local sledding hill or tubing park for a fun activity everyone can enjoy.



A short walk after dinner is an easy way to get outside and have family time. If you don't have sidewalks or streetlights, walk facing traffic with each family member using a flashlight to make sure cars can see you. (If you have clothes with reflective material, wear them too.) Even a 10 minute walk will help you become more active and learn to get used to spending more time outside in winter. Most adults are surprised how warm they are when they keep moving instead of standing around watching their kids play.

During storms, rain, or icy conditions, play games inside instead of watching TV or movies. Active games such as Twister, hopscotch (using masking tape or yarn on the floor instead of chalk), and bowling (using washed out plastic milk jugs and a sturdy ball), are easy ways to stay active in the winter.



Board games and checkers are another fun way to spend time as a family. These games are fun and teach children about taking turns, reading and math skills.



Some families buy a large jigsaw puzzle at the start of the winter and work on it during bad weather. Puzzles teach children concentration, problem solving, and hand-eye coordination.

Be patient with yourself and your children if you are making a change. It will take a while for a new habit to feel like it is part of the family routine.

Getting Active in the Winter



- Make an effort to limit TV and computer time this winter. Aim for no more than 2 hours per day of TV (including watching movies, DVDs, or video games) and computer time.
- Time away from TV, movies, and computers encourages creativity, reading, and playing outside.
- On the weekends, get outside during the day and enjoy the fresh air and daylight. Winter has many warm, sunny days to enjoy.
- Do you see animal prints in the snow? Find out what animals they belong to at: <http://www.wildlife.state.nh.us/Wildlife/wildlife.htm> click on "Special download: Pocket Guide to N.H. Animal Tracks." Or ask for a book about NH wildlife tracking at your local library.



Fun Things To Do Outside in the Snow

- Fill small spray bottles with colored water and create snow art. Spray snow sculptures, snow men and snow castles.
- Make snow angels – lie on the snow and make a body print, move arms up and down and legs back a forth. This makes an angel imprint in the snow.
- Decorate snow angels with cut up pieces of fruit, bird seed, cracked corn, and vegetables. Birds and winter animals will enjoy finding this treat.
- Make a rainbow ice castle. Fill plastic food containers with water, add 20 drops of food coloring per cup of water, mix and freeze outside overnight. When you are ready to start building, bring the ice inside. When the ice easily turns inside the container it is ready to come out. Pop out the colored ices and decorate the castle. Use snow between ice blocks to make them stick together.



Maple Syrup Snow Candy

Have you ever heard of pouring boiling hot maple syrup on fresh snow to make candy? This tradition is over 300 years old. It is believed that Iroquois and Abenaki Indians, who made maple syrup, taught European settlers to make this sweet treat. The cold and moisture of the snow hardens the hot maple syrup and turns it into a sweet taffy. It is sometimes called Jack Wax or maple taffy.

To make at home, heat maple syrup in a saucepan to 230°. If you don't have a candy thermometer, test the syrup by dipping a spoon into it. The syrup is ready when it starts to thicken and does not easily slide off the spoon.

Have kids stay outside and pack fresh, clean snow into small bowl (don't use plastic). When the syrup is ready, take the saucepan outside and pour some maple syrup into each bowl of snow. The syrup will turn to taffy before your eyes!

It is traditional to eat the Jack Wax with fingers and to eat slices of sour pickles afterward. The sour taste of the pickle is said to balance out the sweetness of the maple taffy!





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Spring 2008

TV Turn Off Week

April 22-27, 2008

Families often want to reduce the amount of TV their children watch, but are not sure how to do this. To reduce TV time, try these tips:

- An easy first step is to turn off the TV during meals. This helps families talk about how their day went and connect after a busy day.
- Leave a piece of paper near the TVs for everyone to write down when they watch TV. At the end of a week, total up the hours of each person's TV time. You may be surprised by how much TV everyone is watching.
- Set an easy goal that everyone can reach. For example, reduce TV for a half hour a day or only watch shows that you really enjoy. Then use that time to play outside or do something as a family.
- For more information go to: www.tvturnoff.org.
- Parental control tools allow parents to limit the types of TV shows children can view. All televisions 13" or larger (made after 2000) are equipped with V-Chip Parental Control Technology. For more information go to: www.thetvboss.org (The website has information in English and Spanish.)

Survey reports that Americans know what is good for us.

A recent study by ACNielsen shows that Americans know how to be healthy. The problem is that we usually don't do the healthy things that we know we should do!

According to the *LifeChoices* study released in October 2007, 65% of Americans believe that reducing the amount of junk food they eat is an effective way to control weight, and about 64% of have tried to lose weight this way. Likewise, 62% responded that taking up a sport, hobby, or exercise program was an effective way to lose weight, but only 32% of people had tried to lose weight by becoming more active.

On the positive side, most people (88%) said that adding activity was an effective way to lose weight and improve health. The survey also found that most people think health messages are too hard to follow.

When making a change, it is important to keep it simple. Small, simple changes over time are easier to stick with and will give the same results over time.



Simple ways to improve your health:

- Drink water instead of sugar sweetened soft drinks and juices.
- Eat fruits and vegetables at every meal or snack.
- Add some activity to your day – a few 10 minute walks a day will add to your health.
- Make meal sizes smaller; don't cut out your favorite foods, instead cut down on the portion sizes.
- Cut down on high calorie, low nutrient foods (deep fried foods, bakery items, and fast food).
- Fill up on water, fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.

ACNielsen US News Release, October 2007.

Spring is Here... on the calendar anyway! Spring can bring warm days, windy days, and cloudy days, even in one day! Dress in layers to be comfortable in any weather. Start with a t-shirt, followed by a light sweatshirt or fleece, then a windbreaker or light raincoat as a top layer to be ready to get outside and play, even in the rain!



A little rain never hurt anybody...all you need is a raincoat (rain boots are nice too) and fun attitude!



Spring is a wonderful time of the year, the birds are singing, trees are starting to bud. What else is happening in your yard, neighborhood, or park? Take some time outside and look at what's changing. Maybe you'll see some trees budding and plants starting to come up.

Remember play clothes? Let kids have some clothes that can get dirty so they can have fun outside. You can teach your kids to make mud pies like you did as a child. Get creative and decorate mud pies with leaves, flowers, stones, shells, and pebbles.

Rainy Day Activities – Tired of playing in the rain? Get ready for a garden this summer. Starting a gardening project is a fun way to look forward to summer. Start by planting some flower, herb, or vegetable seeds that you can put in a garden or a container for a porch, deck or sunny stoop in the summer.



Wash yogurt containers or margarine tubs to use as pots. Clear containers let kids see the root system develop before the plant sprouts. Carefully poke a few holes in the bottom so that water can drain out. Fill containers with seed starting mix (or potting soil), tamp down so soil is packed down, put seeds in the soil, making sure they have a small layer of soil over them.



Keep in a sunny spot and keep moist by covering pots with plastic wrap. As soon as the seeds germinate (sprouts appear) remove plastic wrap. Keep plants in a warm location and keep soil moist.



Kid friendly seeds (that sprout quickly) include sunflower, zinnia, radish, lettuce, bush and snap beans. When the days get warm, put plants outside to get them used to the outdoors. Bring plants inside at night. After the danger of frost (late May to early June depending on your location), plants can be planted outdoors.

Discover Wild New Hampshire Day! Saturday, April 26 from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm.



Try your hand at archery, learn to cast with *Let's Go Fishing* volunteers, see retriever dogs in action, big fish, and trained falcons. Learn to find your way with a map and compass, or try a scavenger hunt, wildlife arts and crafts, or a nature walk. You can even meet Smokey the Bear and learn about NH forests!

The event is free and takes place at the NH Fish and Game Department, Hazen Drive, Concord, NH, rain or shine. For more information call 271-33211 or go to: www.wildnh.com.



The KidPower! newsletter is free and published by the NH Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health Services, Nutrition and Health Promotion Section. For more information contact the KidPower! Program at 1-800-852-3345 Ext. 4623, email the program at: KidPower@dhhs.state.nh.us, or visit the KidPower! web page at: <http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/DHHS/NHP/Children>.





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Summer 2008

Meteor Showers



In the beginning of August there are meteor showers called the Perseids. They start in mid-July and peak in mid-August. The best time to see them this year is August 12, when up to 60 meteors per hour can be seen!

Meteor showers take place when the Earth moves through a meteor stream. The meteor stream is called the Perseid cloud (which gives the meteor shower its name) and stretches along the orbit of the Swift-Tuttle Comet. The Perseid cloud is made up of dust that was left by the comet when it passed by the Sun.

To see the meteor shower go out on a clear, dark, moonless night, away from street lights. The meteor showers start slowly but will intensify around 11:00 pm.

If you can't stay up late you can get up early (one to one-and-a-half hours before dawn) and watch the meteor activity at its' peak. As the sun begins to rise (and the sky gets lighter in color) the meteor showers will decrease.

Kids Need Nature Play

Between 1981 and 1997, on average, children spent four less hours per week playing and five more hours per week in school!



Technology (video games, computer games, and hand held games) has changed the way children play and is a big factor in why children don't play outside anymore. Parents are also fearful for their children's safety in the outdoors due to fear of traffic, crime, poison ivy, bugs, and ticks.

Does it make a difference how children play? Is it better for children to play outdoors, making mud-pies, catching bugs and worms, and exploring the natural environment? The answer is**yes!**

- Play in nature helps children learn to handle conflict, take turns, try new things, and develop friendships.
- Children that have contact with nature score higher on tests of concentration and self-discipline.
- Children who regularly play in natural environments show better large muscle fitness (running, jumping, climbing, coordination, and balance) and are sick less often.
- When children play in nature they use their imagination more and can cooperate more with others when they play.
- Time in nature helps children and adults deal with stress, recover from illness quicker, and feel better about themselves.
- Children who play in nature have more positive feelings about each other.
- Outdoor environments help children to become independent.

The next time your child wants to turn on the TV or play a video game, ask them to go play outside, it's better for their body and their brain!

At first kids may need ideas about what to do outside, but over time they will use their imagination, especially if they play without adult direction. Stay nearby to keep them safe – but let their curiosity help them decide how to explore and play in nature.

Adapted from Interaction with Nature during the Middle Years: It's Importance in Children's Development and Nature's Future, by Randy White of White Hutchinson Leisure & Learning Group
www.whitehutchinson.com/children/articles/nature.shtml

Head to the Beach – This is a great way to spend a day outside.



Head to the ocean or a lake with a sandy beach. Rock collecting, building sandcastles, and looking for crabs and shells at the seashore are all great ways to enjoy being outside and connecting with nature.

Check out the NH State Park website for great beaches and lakes. NH parks have different services available such as: parking, bathrooms, changing rooms, picnic tables, paddle boat rentals, and lifeguards. Check out what they have to offer at: <http://www.nhparks.state.nh.us/state-parks/state-beaches/> or call 271-3556.

Explore Your Neighborhood – Kids can explore the outdoors near where they live too. Being outside can mean spending time in a yard, park, ball field or school playground.



With your child, explore the edges of the lawn, field, or playground...away from the foot traffic and lawn mowers – you may find worms, butterflies, and colorful rocks.

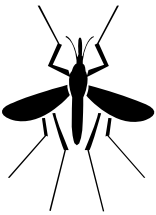
If you have potted plants, or window boxes, let your child water plants and help care for them – under your watchful eye.



In the garden (flower or vegetable) or edge of the lawn, leave an area for digging and playing so that your child can get their hands dirty and explore.

If you are worried about stains on clothes, set aside some play clothes that can get dirty or stained, and then let your child explore.

Enjoy the outdoors without bug bites and sunburns – Make your outdoor time more enjoyable by following these health tips:



Remember to wear sunscreen (SPF 15 or higher) and apply a palmful per person, every two hours to avoid sunburn.

Children and adults should wear protective clothing such as long pants, long-sleeved shirts, and socks during the evening, at night, and at dawn and use a bug spray containing 30% or less DEET. Repellents with oil of lemon eucalyptus, picardin, and IR3535 have also been proven safe and effective in preventing mosquito bites. Always follow label directions for age restrictions and how to apply repellents. Children should not apply bug spray to themselves.

SAFE KIDS 500 at the NH Motor Speedway – Wednesday June 18th beginning at 5:00 pm



Join Safe Kids New Hampshire, Children's Hospital at Dartmouth, and the NH Motor Speedway, for the fourth annual one-of-a-kind bike ride around the track in Loudon! All children must be accompanied by an adult caregiver and all participants (kids **and** adults) must wear a bike helmet. Bike safety checks and bike education materials will be made available by the Bike-Walk Alliance of NH. Healthy snacks will be provided.

There is no cost to attend but donations to Children's Hospital at Dartmouth (CHaD) will be gratefully accepted. For more information or to RSVP contact Safe Kids NH at 1-877-783-0432.



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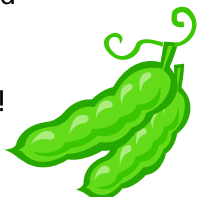
Fall 2008

A recent study in the Wisconsin Medical Journal finds that children that are given fruit and vegetables at an early age are more likely to choose fruits or vegetables over less healthy snacks.

The study included fourth, seventh, and ninth grade students. Students who were given fruits and vegetables for snacks at school were more likely to try new fruits and vegetables at school compared to students at schools not in the program.

The greatest difference was for the fourth grade students. This confirms what nutritionists have been teaching parents, to introduce fruits and vegetables as early as possible so that children grow up eating more of these healthy foods. It's never too late to encourage the healthy habit of eating fruits and vegetables.

Eating fruits and vegetables is not just for kids. They have vitamins and minerals that can help protect health. Most are lower in calories and higher in fiber than other foods. Eating fruits and vegetables as part of a healthy diet instead of high fat foods helps adults to control weight too!



Back to School Routines

A good morning routine can make the transition back to school easier for everyone in the house. Kids will learn better at school when they eat breakfast and have what they need packed for school. Parents will benefit by arriving at work on time and having a less stressful morning.

An easier morning starts with night before!

With a bit of organization, planning ahead and commitment, school and work mornings can go smoothly. Create a night before routine that includes baths and showers, setting out clothes, having children check their backpacks for homework or papers needing parent signatures, then putting their backpacks by the door. Packing lunches the night before is a great time saver. Pack and store lunch in the fridge overnight.

Making mornings work

Parents have to get out of bed with enough time to get everyone out of the house. This is always a challenge, especially if the night before was busy with preparations, but it's worth it to get out of bed early to be ready when the kids need to get up.

The child that takes the most time in the bathroom should get up first so that they don't slow everyone else down. Encourage kids to dress themselves. Children as young as age 4 may only need help with tights, buckles, or shoelaces. Having clothes laid out the night before will prevent searching for missing socks, sneakers, and other items.

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day

Make sure kids have enough time to eat breakfast! Eating breakfast helps help them succeed in school and eat healthier during the day. Breakfast can be a bowl of cereal, whole grain toast with peanut butter, low-fat yogurt or a smoothie; even leftover pizza or pasta is a good breakfast. Top it off with a glass of milk or 100% fruit juice and your child will be ready for their day. School breakfast is a healthy option too. After breakfast is time for kids to wash up, brush teeth, and get hair combed or styled.

Be patient when making changes and allow time for a new habit to be established. It may take a few weeks for this new routine to feel like an old habit.

Tips for surviving Trick or Treat Night!



- Make sure your kids have a meal before going out to Trick or Treat.
- Remind children that it is not safe to eat candy until it has been checked by an adult.
- After Trick or Treat night encourage healthy eating by setting limits. For example, allow your child to pick out 5 small pieces of candy to eat over the next few days.
- Keep candy out of sight to cut down on the amount of candy children ask to eat.



Children are four times more likely to be injured by a car on Halloween than any other night of the year! Keep them safe by:

- Put reflective tape on costumes and have children carry flashlights.
- Travel in groups with an adult. Adults should dress in light colored clothes and carry a flashlight.



This year start some healthy traditions.

- Instead of giving out candy, give stickers, spooky rings, small boxes (4-6 ounces) of raisins, individual size microwave popcorn, small packages (4-6 ounces) of crackers, Halloween themed bracelets or hair ties, pencils, erasers or pencil toppers.
- If you want to give out candy, buy the smallest size possible.
- Add activity by going pumpkin or apple picking this time of year.
- Ask children to help with raking and yard work and let them play in the leaves!

Skillet Zucchini with Chopped Tomatoes - this easy recipe uses easy to find local in-season produce.

Ingredients:

1 teaspoon vegetable oil or whipped butter
1 cup chopped onion
4 small (6 inch) zucchinis, thinly sliced
2 medium tomatoes, chopped
salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

In a large non-stick skillet, melt oil or butter over medium heat; add onions and cook, stirring until softened. Add zucchini and cook for 2 minutes. Add tomatoes and cook for 3 to 5 minutes or until zucchini is tender-crisp. Add salt and pepper to taste. Serve on top of spaghetti with sauce, or as a side dish with rice and meat or beans.

